



STONINGTON HARBOR MANAGEMENT COMMISSION Newsletter

Harbor Happenings



Volume 4, Issue 1

Spring/Summer 2015

FROM THE CHAIRMAN: *Jay Spalding*

The Stonington Harbor Management Commission (SHMC) publishes this newsletter annually to present important developments and information concerning the Harbor. 2014 was a busy year in the harbor. We started in the early spring with a hydrographic survey of the entire harbor. The survey will allow us to do a better job of managing the mooring areas where we permit private and commercial moorings as well as the transient anchorage area. Construction permits have slowed somewhat this year as repairs from Hurricane Sandy have been completed. In August, we conducted our annual review of the harbor management plan. No substantive changes were proposed this year. This is an annual requirement that provides an opportunity to make changes to the way we manage our harbor: please participate if you have any ideas. In the fall, the commission and harbormaster worked with the mooring maintenance contractors in the harbor to fully implement the new mooring grid. Much of this was only possible because of the increase of the mooring fees last year. The Commission works hard to wisely spend the proceeds from the fees to improve the harbor. 2014 concluded with the dredging of the Sandy Point Channel funded by the US Army Corps of Engineers.

The SHMC meets on the second Monday every month at 7:00pm in the Stonington Police Station Public Meeting room. The public is always invited. The Harbor Management Plan, SHMC Agendas and Minutes are available on the Stonington Town web site. And please contact me directly with your concerns.

FROM THE HARBORMASTER: *Eric Donch*

Did you get enough snow this winter? If you stayed in New England, you probably did. Those that traveled south for the winter had their share of "cold"

too, I'm told. The good news is that we should be putting boats back in the water soon.

It was a busy season in 2014. Many of you may have seen the very large tree that was floating in our waters in September. Working with divers from Aqua Sports dive shop, we were able to cut much of the tree up and disposed of it.



Once again in September Stonington Harbor was host to the Connecticut Special Olympics Sailing Regatta. A great weekend of sailing was had with much help from our mooring holders and local residents. November and December brought the long awaited dredging rig to Sandy Point channel. (A more detailed article follows). Early this year we were successful in keeping the fog horn located on our outer breakwater from being silenced or having it become activated by VHF radio as the USCG had proposed.

The mooring grid in Stonington Harbor will be nearly complete by the time everyone gets onto their moorings. I expect we will have to make some minor adjustments once all the boats are on the moorings. If you feel that your vessel is too close to your neighbor, please get a hold of me so that we can make adjustments. Most vessels were moved less than 50 ft to accomplish the gridding. A chart of the grid is at the back of this newsletter. All references to moorings will be made using the new numbering

system from here on. Even the launches should be using the new numbering system when talking mooring locations.



I look forward to seeing everyone on the water this season. Flag me down to give me ideas for our harbor or provide feedback on what you like / dislike. I can be reached at 860-303-5046, and also via email at: harbormaster@usa.com, and please use VHF channels 9 and 72 to hail me when on the water.

DREDGING SANDY POINT CHANNEL

Starting November 6th and lasting until December 14th, H&L Contracting from Port Jefferson, NY, worked 24 hours a day, seven days a week to dredge the Sandy Point channel. The Army Corps of Engineers oversaw the dredging operation.



A "pump dredge" was used to move the approximately 70,000 yards of material onto the island. From there it was trucked to where it was required and spread. Two excavators, one large earth moving truck, and a very large bulldozer were

moved onto the island for this operation. The dredged material was deposited on the island's mid section which has made that area higher and wider.

The channel has been restored to 10 ft deep and 100 ft wide. Don't be fooled by the width of the channel. From the northern edge marked by the green cans, the channel is dredged 100 ft to its southern edge. Beyond the 100 ft width the bottom comes up quickly and is still very shallow as you near the beach.

We were also able to confirm many large rocks exist to the north side of the channel not very far outside of the markers. One of which is located approx. 30 ft NW of green can "7". Removal of these rocks was not part of the contract as they lie outside of the channel. So you need to honor this mark.

You will also notice that the north western tip of the island was moved back approximately 300 ft (see photo below). It was then graded to match the original grade of the island so that the Piping Plover would return as in past years. This was part of the permit required by the U.S. Environmental Agency. The removal of the tip of the island makes it appear that Green Can "5" at the north western tip of the island was moved west. It was not. The can is no longer "hidden" behind the tip of the island as you approach from Stonington Point.



Sandy Point as seen from Stonington Point

H&L Contracting also helped us by removing multiple dumpsters worth of debris that had accumulated on the island.

MOORING USE SURVEYS

You may notice someone in a small boat circling your mooring and possibly taking pictures. During the summer months, members of the Commission assist the Harbormaster by performing surveys of the mooring fields. Three surveys are conducted over the course of the summer. They determine if the mooring is on location with the proper buoy, if

the buoy markings are correct, and if the assigned vessel is using the mooring. These surveys may include a photograph for verification. Each Commission member is assigned a mooring zone in order to split the workload. If you intend to vacate your mooring for an extended period (like a summer cruise) please notify the Harbormaster so that the survey properly accounts for that temporary vacancy.

RULES OF THE ROAD

We are all aware of the “Rules of the Road” on the water, but are you aware of the “Pecking order” of underway vessels? This list helps clarify situations with vessels meeting within sight of each other.

- **Overtaken Vessel** – top priority
- **Vessels not under command** - disabled and grounded vessels
- **Vessels restricted by ability to maneuver** – do to nature of their work e.g towing, servicing a buoy, dredging, etc.
- **Fishing vessels** – nets, lines, trawls, or other fishing apparatus which restrict maneuverability, trolling specifically doesn’t count.
- **Sailing vessels** – when under sail only
- **Power driven vessels** – any vessel propelled by machinery

Note that when a sailing vessel is using its engine it is a power driven vessel. Other vessels can’t tell if it is in gear or not.

Each of these vessels must keep clear of the vessels above it on the list. In Stonington Harbor, please consider our larger fishing vessels as “restricted by ability to maneuver” and keep clear.

You will notice that rowboats, kayaks, stand up paddle boards and other human powered vessels are not on the list. These should be considered on a case by case basis. As a general rule, these vessels should give way to all the others on the list as they are the most maneuverable.

Remember, it is the responsibility of ALL vessel operators to avoid collisions.

2015 SPECIAL PURPOSE MOORINGS

Special Purpose (SP) moorings are intended to provide access to the water for the general public. From January 1st to Feb 28th the SHMC has an open submission period in which eligible organizations

may submit their annual application. Harbormaster Donch identified 7 mooring locations that would not be appropriate for private moorings. This year in the March meeting the commission approved the following for the 2015 season:

1) Three moorings for Stonington Harbor Yacht Club to support their public access programs using their Ideal 18 keelboats. These programs are open to the public. Anyone interested in this program should contact the office at SHYC, (860) 535-0112, or via e-mail at office@shyc.us

2) Four moorings for New England Science & Sailing (NESS) at 70 Water Street, Stonington. These moorings will hold a fleet of keelboats that are used in a variety of NESS instructional programs for the spring, summer, and fall seasons. These programs are open to the public. Anyone interested in accessing these boats should contact Mark Zagol at NESS, (860) 535-9362, or via e-mail at mzagol@nessf.org.

OLD WHARF/ BREAKWATER PLANNING BEGINS

In early February 2015, proposals were formally sought for professional advance planning and engineering related to renewal and restoration of the “Old Stonington Wharf / Breakwater.” The structure has fallen into disrepair since the Army corps of Engineers stopped maintaining it more than a half-century ago. The advance planning work, funded in 2014-15 by a state grant of \$30,000, has been awarded to Docko, Inc, will begin this spring and should be completed during the summer.

The old structure, built by the Federal Government between 1827 and 1831, holds both practical and historic significance for harbor users and the residents of Stonington. For many decades the massive stone wharf / breakwater not only provided a public dock and a source of storm protection for the east side of Stonington Harbor, but was a favorite destination for walkers, pleasure boaters and sport fishermen. However, since maintenance was abandoned, it has been suffering substantial and accelerating damage, as the old structure has lost both mass and structural integrity. With a shared Town / Borough / Harbor Management Commission realization that the structure would soon be beyond repair unless action were undertaken, a joint Task Force was created in 2014 to investigate how best to restore and preserve it. The present phase will result

in an expert assessment of the situation at hand, a recommended and cost-effective plan for the restoration process, and the initiation of the federal and state permitting process that will enable work to begin.

NEWS FROM HARBOR PARTNERS

CUSH

If you have noticed folks in small boats taking water quality samples in our area it would be the CUSH (Clean Up Sound and Harbors) volunteers. Since 2008, general water quality indicators have been measured bi-weekly May through October by CUSH. CUSH has recently published a report on the water quality of the four estuaries: in coastal Stonington Harbor, Wequetequock Cove, the Mystic River, and Pequotsepos Cove. The report covers the years 2008-2013, and represents the most comprehensive set of publicly available water-quality data collected by a single organization in Stonington coastal waters. The purpose of this monitoring program is to assess the current and long-term health of local waters, to identify any ongoing trends, and to track identifiable sources of pollution.

All estuaries that were sampled, including Stonington Harbor, had excessive summer levels of inorganic nitrogen, the pollutant of greatest concern, and largely the result of human activity. To make your personal contributions to decreasing pollution consider the following actions:

- Eliminate the use of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides; seek to manage lawns and gardens organically
- Manage or eliminate sources of bacteria and excess nutrient pollution; take measures to control surface runoff
- Practice clean boating-utilize pump out facilities and other sustainable practices
- Be an advocate- voice your water quality concerns to your town officials and the CT DEEP.

To learn more on how you can contribute to decreasing nutrient and bacterial pollution, and minimizing storm water runoff, see the CUSH website: www.cushinc.org. The full water quality report is also available at the CUSH web site.

PLEASE USE THE PUMP-OUT BOATS

Town of Westerly pump-out boats offer a great service that keeps our harbor and surrounding

waters clean. The SHMC has installed discharge services for the pump-out boat (only) so they no longer have to return to Westerly to discharge their loads and can spend more time attending boats. A pump-out boat can be called to your boat via VHF Ch 8 (preferred) or by calling 401-348-2572.

STONINGTON SHELLFISH COMMISSION

The waters of the Town of Stonington support rich shellfish populations that are an important natural resource. This resource represents a significant source of adult shellfish for recreational and commercial shellfishing, as well as providing a breeding stock for sustaining populations of oysters, scallops, and hard and soft-shell clams. The Stonington Shellfish Commission, which was established by the Board of Selectmen in 1983, regulates the harvest of clams, oysters, scallops and other shellfish in town waters in accordance with the Statutes of the State of Connecticut.

The goals of the Stonington Shellfish Commission are:

- Maintain and improve access to recreational shellfish resources;
- Manage commercial shellfishing to maintain and enhance a traditional economic livelihood;
- Manage shellfishing activities to provide benefit to the Town of Stonington and its residents;
- Encourage, through collaboration with other boards, commissions, agencies, groups and individuals, the promotion and enhancement of shellfish resources and the environment they inhabit and rely upon.

Clamming is a popular recreational activity in Stonington, particularly in the summer. Each year, the Shellfish Commission issues over 700 recreational shellfishing permits. The best sites for the recreational harvesting are the conditional shellfishing areas east of Mason's Island and south of Quiambug Cove and are open only in relatively dry conditions. They are closed to shellfishing for at least a week after heavy rainfall (over an inch in 24 hours), which can lead to elevated bacteria counts in the sea water. To reopen an area, the Commission tests the water for bacteria content. The two most popular conditional areas are restocked with adult shellfish twice a year. The revenue from the sale of recreational shellfishing and scallop permits allows the Shellfish Commission to maintain its financial self-sufficiency. The Shellfish Commission uses approximately half of its income to buy clams to restock the conditional areas.



Shellfish Warden Rob Russell

Stonington hosts a small but growing aquaculture industry in town waters. Currently, there are four active aquaculture license agreements in the Stonington waters in the lower Mystic River. All are held by oyster growers who are members of the Noank Aquaculture Cooperative. As part of their payment for using Town of Stonington shellfish grounds, the growers provide boats, loading facilities, and labor for the twice-yearly shellfish restocking program. The Shellfish Commission is also working with several additional individuals who are interested in starting oyster aquaculture programs in town waters.

Throughout the year, the Shellfish Warden monitors recreational and commercial shellfishing in Stonington waters. He also helps collect seawater samples to ensure that the waters meet the requirements of Connecticut Bureau of Aquaculture, which closely monitors the management of shellfishing in Connecticut.

For further information, please visit the Stonington Shellfish Commission's web site: <http://www.stoningtonshellfishcommission.org/>. To determine the status of the Conditional Areas, call the Shellfish Commission's Info line (860-599-7575).

STONINGTON POLICE BOAT

The Stonington Police Marine Unit acquired a new multi-function vessel in the Spring of 2014 to replace the older model center console boat the department had been using for years. The new vessel is a 27ft

full cabin vessel, manufactured by SAFE Boats International and equipped with twin Yamaha 300 outboards. The entire cost of this new vessel was covered by a Federal Grant. The new platform greatly expands the capabilities of the Marine Unit. Primarily staffed on weekends and holidays during the summer months, the Marine Unit will utilize this vessel for regional port security, patrol/enforcement, safe boating education as well as search and rescue. Officers assigned to the Marine Unit have attended a variety of specialized training courses in these areas.



The Stonington Police Department as well as the Stonington Harbormaster is part of a larger group of marine assets known as the New London Port Security Marine Group. The Stonington Police can and will utilize this new vessel to assist our surrounding towns with everything from on-the-water special events to search and rescue missions throughout the region. The primary area of use will be the waters off of Stonington including Stonington Harbor, Fisher Island Sound and the Mystic and Pawcatuck Rivers.

STONINGTON SMALL BOAT ASSOCIATION

Stonington Small Boat Association (SSBA) was organized about 1975 to provide boat storage and water access to Stonington Harbor on land leased from the Town near the playground by the Town Docks. There is a launching ramp for small sailboats and unpowered vessels. Racks are available for dinghies and kayaks. Ground on-site storage of boats up to 300 lbs requires owners to provide their own dollies. SSBA continues to make improvements including running water, improved storage racks, and a concrete ramp with retaining wall.



SSBA is an organization of volunteers who are dedicated to maintaining and upgrading small boat access to the harbor. Storage space applications should be received by May 1st.

For information about joining, volunteering, and storage space for your boat send a note to: SSBA, P.O. Box 28, Stonington, CT 06378 or email ssba28@comcast.net.

WEDNESDAY NIGHT RACING IN THE HARBOR

Almost every summer on Wednesday night for the past 47 years, the Stonington Dinghy Club has sponsored small sailboat racing in the Harbor. The 2015 10 week series starts on June 17th. It is open to any sailboat 20 ft or less, sailed by anyone, of any age. There are no registration fees or requirements other than to check in with the race committee (RC) on the water by 5:50pm for the first gun at 6:00pm. That's right...totally free racing!

The RC uses a small power boat anchored to the west of the channel and about due west of the fishing memorial flag pole at the Town Docks. The RC organizes similar boats into several appropriate starts.



Typical racers are Sunfish, Optimists, Cape Dories, Lasers, JY-15s, FJs, 420s, Ideal 18s, Highlanders, catamarans and any other boat racing under the Portsmouth Handicapping system. At times, there

have been 55 or more sailboats out there in different starts and courses having great fun!

The RC assigns the course on the water which is always only one race, typically sailed in a triangle with 1 or 2 laps, and always within the picturesque Harbor.

After each race participants and friends/family are welcomed to a buffet dinner, catered at nominal cost, at the Wadawanuck Club by the head of the harbor, where that day's results are announced.

After the final event of August 19th, there's an awards banquet where all who raced 7 of 10 events qualify for an award. Also presented are trophies for class winners, Youngest Sailor, Most Improved, Best Overall, etc., and the much prized McCagg Cup (shown below), for overall love of the sport.



Join the fun...it makes Wednesdays the best night of the summer!

WHERE IS MY MOORING?

Now that we are all on the new mooring grid you need to know your mooring designation in the new numbering system. All of the new designations are of the format number/letter, e.g 15P or 37M. If you see the letter first it is the old system. Just knowing the number/letter will tell you where the mooring is located. We designed this system to be user friendly for transient arrivals, all mooring holders and launch drivers. The next page lays out the numbering scheme. Row 1 is at the harbor entrance (south). Column A is to the far right (east). The rows align with specific Latitude values, so as you go North the numbers go up. The columns align with specific Longitude, so as you go West the letters go up. Note the grid is only for moorings in the anchorage areas west of Stonington Point. Moorings outside the Old Wharf/Monsanto Breakwater and on the east side will maintain their existing designations.



WAITING LIST IMPORTANT DATES

Anytime: Applications can be submitted and received
 January 31st: Current Waiting List published on web site and at Town Hall
 July 31st: Waiting List updated and published again
 September 30th: Waiting List Renewal Applications sent to those on current Waiting List
 November 30th: Waiting List Renewal Applications due to Harbormaster

MOORING HOLDER IMPORTANT DATES

January 31st: Current assigned Mooring Holder List published on web site and at Town Hall
 January 31st: Mooring Permit Renewal Applications sent to current mooring holders
 Feb 28th: Special Purpose Mooring Applications due to Harbormaster
 March 31st: Mooring Permit Renewal Applications due to Harbormaster
 June 30th: Winter Sticks must be replaced by approved Mooring Balls
 July 31st: Assigned Mooring List updated and published
 October 1st: Winter Stick may begin replacing Mooring Balls
 December 31st: Required Mooring Inspection documentation due Harbormaster
 December 31st: All Mooring Permits expire

Stonington Harbor Management Commission

152 Elm Street
 Stonington, CT 06378

Stonington Harbormaster: Eric Donch

PO Box 135
 Stonington, CT 06378

Assistant Harbormaster: Charles Estabrook**Commissioners/term expiration:**Borough Representatives (5):

Sherman Crites, <i>Treasurer</i>	6/15
Jesse Diggs, <i>Vice Chairman</i>	6/15
Rodney Johnstone	6/17
Bruce MacKinnon	6/16
Edward Smith	6/17

Town Representatives (5):

David Motherway	04/15
Paul O'Neill	04/16
Caleb Rose	04/16
Jay Spalding, <i>Chairman</i>	04/18
Peter Tacy	04/16

Web Site: <http://www.stonington-ct.gov/stonington-harbor-management-commission>**Stonington Harbor Management Commission**

152 Elm Street
 Stonington, CT 06378

